

ESSAY ASSIGNMENT

The Poisonwood Bible by Barbara Kingsolver

You will write a revised, formal academic essay in response to this novel.

IDEAS & CONTENT: Choose ONE of the four topics below to create a thesis about the novel. Remember that a good thesis must be more than an opinion, but not just a simple fact. In other words, create a statement that you can prove with specific examples from the text, but do not simply summarize or point at facts from the novel. A good thesis *may* be wrong, but with strong proof (examples) and convincing commentary, it will prove successful.

- A recurring theme in literature is the classic war between a passion and responsibility. For instance, a personal cause, a love, a desire for revenge, a determination to redress a wrong, or some other emotion or drive may conflict with moral duty. Choose a character from your summer reading who confronts the demands of a private passion that conflicts with his or her responsibilities. In a well-written essay show clearly the nature of the conflict, its effects upon the character, and its significance to the work.
- In great literature, no scene of violence exists for its own sake. Choose a scene from your summer reading which confronts the reader with a scene or scenes of violence. In a well-organized essay, explain how and why the scene or scenes contribute to the meaning of the complete work. Avoid plot summary.
- Some works of literature use the element of time in a distinct way. The chronological sequence of events may be altered, or time may be suspended or accelerated. Choose one of the novels from our summer reading and show how the author's manipulation of time contributes to the effectiveness of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.
- The British novelist Fay Weldon offers this observation about happy endings. "The writers, I do believe, who get the best and most lasting response from their readers are the writers who offer a happy ending through moral development. By a happy ending, I do not mean mere fortunate events -- a marriage or a last minute rescue from death -- but some kind of spiritual reassessment or moral reconciliation, even with the self, even at death." Although your summer reading novel does NOT have a traditional ending, it shows the reader a significant moment of moral development. In a well-written essay, identify the "spiritual reassessment or moral reconciliation" evident in the ending and explain its significance in the work as a whole.

ORGANIZATION: Use a traditional, deductive essay structure. **You can find important guides to essay structure, essay momentum, and paragraph building in your *Olympus High Writers Guide*.**

VOICE: Your audience is sophisticated, informed, and well-read. Use a formal, academic voice (no first- or second-person) and avoid summarizing plot. You do NOT have to justify the greatness of the literature OR provide summaries of the plot or characters. DO provide specific examples to prove that YOU have read carefully and thoughtfully, though.

WORD CHOICE: For a sophisticated audience, use active, vivid verbs; choose concise, accurate vocabulary; and avoid slang, clichés, and other "dead" expressions. **(See your writer's guide.)**

SENTENCE FLUENCY: Nothing suggests your ideas are sophisticated and varied better than sophisticated and varied sentence structures. **(See your writer's guide.)**

CONVENTIONS: Revise and edit carefully to avoid common errors. **(See your writer's guide, esp. the revision checklist on p. 40.)** Meet the format requirements too: type it (double-spaced, 1" margins, simple 10- or 12-pt. font), put your name and class period in the RH top corner, give your essay an interesting title (underlined or in all capital letters, centered).

DUE DATE: Your first day of class!
